

ASSEMBLY BILL 1979

Mentors for Foster Youth: Fee Waivers

Assembly Member, Karen Bass (D – 47)

- Sponsor-

Mr. Leroy D. Baca, Sheriff of Los Angeles County and Chairperson of the Inter-Agency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (ICAN)

ISSUE

In California, more than 60% of children in foster care have developmental, emotional, or behavioral problems.

Without legal guardians or parents to aid these children, there is a critical need for constructive guidance and positive reinforcement that the foster care system finds difficulty in providing to all of its wards.

When a mentor is provided for a foster child, it instills a sense of stability that plays a key role in the child's development and well being.

Safety is one of the State's top priorities for foster children in California. Those who wish to volunteer as mentors must clear rigorous background checks from the Department of Justice, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Child Abuse Central Index.

These checks, though necessary, are very costly and often discourage potential mentors who lack the funds to pay for them.

EXISTING LAW

Existing law requires the Department of Justice (DOJ) to complete a background

check for those who wish to volunteer as mentors to foster children.

THIS BILL

AB 1979 seeks to remedy this problem by waiving the fee imposed by the DOJ for conducting background clearance checks (\$47), but *not* waiving the check altogether.

While it is absolutely necessary to maintain rigorous clearances for those who wish to work with foster children, it is also important to address the disincentive of having to pay fees for these checks when often volunteer candidates do not have the means to do so.

Waiving this fee better enables volunteers to mentor foster children and give to them the constructive guidance and care necessary to successful childhood development.

SUMMARY

AB 1979 waives the fee the Department of Justice charges for background checks to volunteer candidates who wish to mentor foster youth.

The Office of Assemblywoman Bass is working closely with DSS and the DOJ to

address potential concerns as this bill moves forward.

Background

The Child Abuse Central Index (CACI) is a database of information about child abuse investigations in California. To work with foster youth, an individual must be cleared by the CACI.

The breakdown for background clearance checks is as follows:

- \$15 for the CACI (part of the DOJ fees);
- \$32 for the DOJ;
- \$24 for the FBI; and,
- \$16 for the Live Scan.

Local Sheriff's Departments determine whether the Live Scan Fee will be waived.

SUPPORT

Children Uniting Nations
Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors
Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department

OPPOSITION

None on file

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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